Ruby Rogers

The Standard, ASL

Designer of the Year

NSPA 2024 submission



Statement

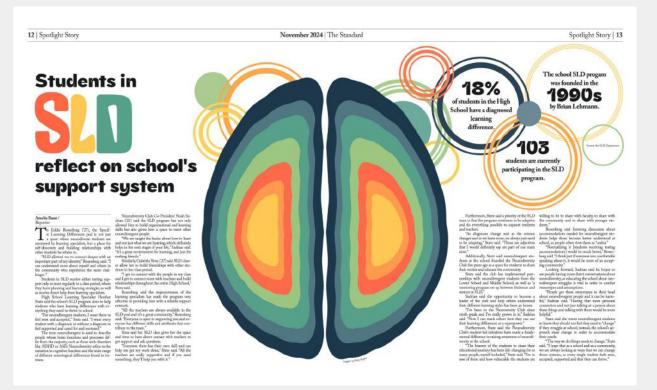
A year ago, I was abruptly inserted into the world of graphic design by becoming my newspaper's Features Editor: Print. Having never touched Adobe software before, I stumbled through Indesign and Illustrator tutorials for weeks before successfully managing to design the centerspread of my first issue alone. Now, seven print issues later, I have the privilege of serving my publication as Editor-in-Chief: Print, where I aim to foster visual creativity and risk-taking among our staff.

My experience working as a Features editor allowed me to understand that design and storytelling go hand-and-hand. A good story is grounded in humanness. It is driven by emotion, connection, and empathy. A good design lifts that narrative higher. Humans are visual; we consume the world through our eyes. A good designer is the invisible force that empowers and elevates. They pull the strings and make the million little choices that go both seen and unseen.

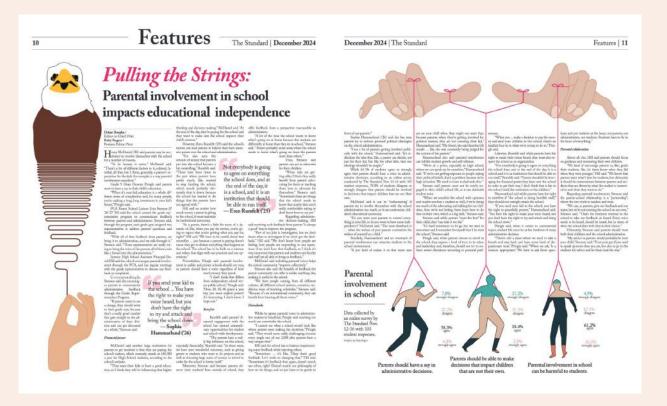
The works in this portfolio reflect just that: design that is wholeheartedly rooted in the story, in the text, in the people. As a section editor, I was able to read each and every one of these stories before designing them, and watch them grow. This offered me a greater insight into the stories themselves - a view into the lives of the people they concerned, that I kept at the heart of every choice while laying out.

My process always starts on paper. I love to sketch out a page multiple times, lightly crossing things out and coloring things in as I go. To me, paper is the freest place to start a design - there are no rules, no restrictions, no pressure. Now, as Editor-in-Chief, I encourage my team of print editors to start with paper and pencil, as this allows more risk-taking and creativity. I encourage them to find colors with intention, to play with shape and how it can interact with text, to experiment so their designs always serve a purpose, and, above all, to ensure their designs raise the story up. My Deputy Editor-in-chief and I have turned our print process into one of collaboration and risk-taking, where we encourage our designers to think outside the box, try new things, fail and persevere, and always start with the story.

I will admit, in my heart I am a journalist. Yet all designers are journalists - they are conveying a message. Telling a story. Words are no longer words but colors, lines, space, balance and hierarchy. A designer of the year is not just a designer, but a storyteller, who weaves together text and image to grow and empower a narrative. It is easy to get lost in the hours of time, the excruciating patience required to move around the pieces, to solve the puzzle. Yet I always remind myself that at the core of every text box and vector point, there is a source, a writer, a reader. Throughout my year as a print editor, I have pushed myself to create not for just for the page, or the design, but for the people behind the words, the people inside the story.



For this spread, I wanted to emphasize the beauty and creativity that can come with neurodiversity, as this story highlights the community of our school's program for students with specific learning differences, where uniqueness is celebrated. Thus, I wanted this spread to be a celebration - of color, form, line, shape, and balance. This piece was centerspread of our issue, and I aimed to take advantage of that - I wanted the brain, in the very center of the paper, to open in a flourish of radiating color, expanding. I used a color palette and layered, wavy designs, inspired by retro '70s advertisements. Additionally, I made the specialty "SLD" font myself on illustrator to bring attention to the acronym that largely represents the neurodiverse community in our school. The symmetry of the spread keeps it balanced, combining the curvy with the linear, the fun and creative with the seriousness of the substance in the piece - nuanced, just like neurodiversity. The circles in the right corner keep the spread from being too heavy with all the solid color in the center, and emphasize the central graphic. With the regular columns of text keeping the story accessible and the vibrant color and bold designs making it engaging, it is a celebration of specific learning differences.

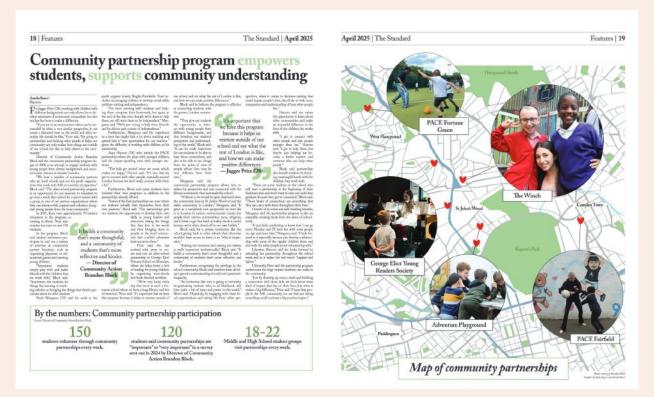


For this spread, I focused on maintaining a verbal-visual connection between the headline and the graphic design. Based off the headline "Pulling the Strings," I made strings a prominent visual throughout both pages to maintain consistency - whether the eagle, my school's mascot, being unravelled, or the strings running between the columns from two puppeteer hands. A lot of the story was about how too much parental involvement in the school threatens its autonomy, and so our mascot, representing the school's identity, being unravelled slowly, was a fitting image to convey the story of the piece. I also wanted to make sure the graphics served an additional storytelling function, so made the puppets being controlled by the hands into graphs, utilizing survey data our publication gathered from the community. The pink strings of the puppets cut through the text just as parental involvement cuts through the lives of students.



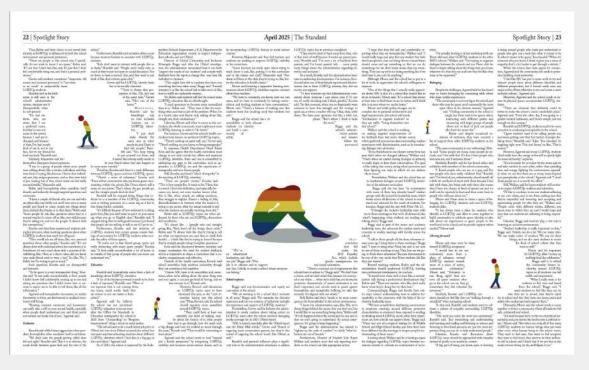


For the design of this story, which was about how the government-mandated addition of VAT tax to tuition would impact families, I wanted to mimic the experience of opening a tuition bill. Full of graphs and large numbers that jump out at the viewer, I wanted the reader to feel that feeling of opening a tuition bill - viewing the sums, the overwhelming feeling of the numbers, the small text. The use of our school's orange brings unity across the two pages. Reading the story, they are reading the bill themselves, which hopefully adds another layer of empathy when reading the stories of families who are impacted.



This story is about my school's local volunteer daycare programs, and that word - local - was key to my design. As the piece was rather short for a newspaper spread, I decided to dedicate the whole right page to a map of our volunteer programs, with photos marking important memories from these spaces. I wanted to emphasize the location of these programs - putting them on a map showed their locality and closeness to our own school, in St. Johns Wood. The photos show the joy and community that come from these connections, a theme repeated throughout the piece. I drew this map from scratch on Illustrator, carving out each white cluster of houses, every park, road, and river, by hand. Since the piece is largely about working with children, I wanted the map to be vibrant and cartoonish, using an energetic green throughout the whole layout.





This centerspread was especially important as it was the first time our publication had covered homophobia and was the longest story in our newspaper's history, spanning 3 pages. The design of this piece is largely conceptual - the circles, created using negative space and the darkness of the text, represent the isolation many LGBTQ+ students experience, even when in such a densely populated community such as the school's (emphasized by the fullness of the text on the page). As I was given the privilege of designing centerspread, I made sure to utilize the center - the central figure acts as the dominant, bringing in the eye, while the figures walking in different directions bring a sense of disconnection and lostness. The dark rainbow contrasts with the black and white of the text, and is used sparsely, emphasizing how many LGBTQ+ students often feel both alone and singled out.